

Native American Cancer Research Corporation Breast Health Fact Sheet



- 📖 Are your breasts healthy?
- 📖 Breast cancer is more common among Alaska Natives, Northern & Southern Plains Indian women than among Natives from other regions in the US. Identifying & treating breast problems early helps increase survival.
- 📖 You can talk with your provider about your breast health risks
- 📖 Now you know. Now you can.

Natives & Breast Cancer Facts

- 📖 Breast cancer is increasing every year among Native women
- 📖 Breast cancer is more common among Natives living in Alaska, the Northern Plains and Southern Plains than in other parts of the country.
- 📖 Breast cancer is less common among southwestern Tribal Nations.
 - 🕒 But even in the southwest, breast cancer is the 2nd leading type of cancer among Native women.
- 📖 Providers can get clear mammogram pictures of Native women's breasts who are in their 40s (white women usually need to be in their 50s for a clear picture) [Roubidoux & Kaur]
- 📖 About half of Native women are younger than 50 when they are diagnosed with breast cancer (Only 1/4 of white women are diagnosed younger than 50)

Healthy Behaviors

- 📖 Today, cancer is the 2nd leading cause of death among American Indians 45 years and older
 - 🕒 But it was uncommon among our ancestors
- 📖 We need to:
 - 🕒 Practice healthy habits like having daily physical activity
 - 🕒 Eat more home-cooked and traditional foods, rather than "fast foods" restaurants.
 - 🕒 Have regular health checkups
 - 🕒 Have regular screenings that look for cancer

Arlene Wahwasuck

Prairie Band Potawatomi
Dx breast cancer 2002

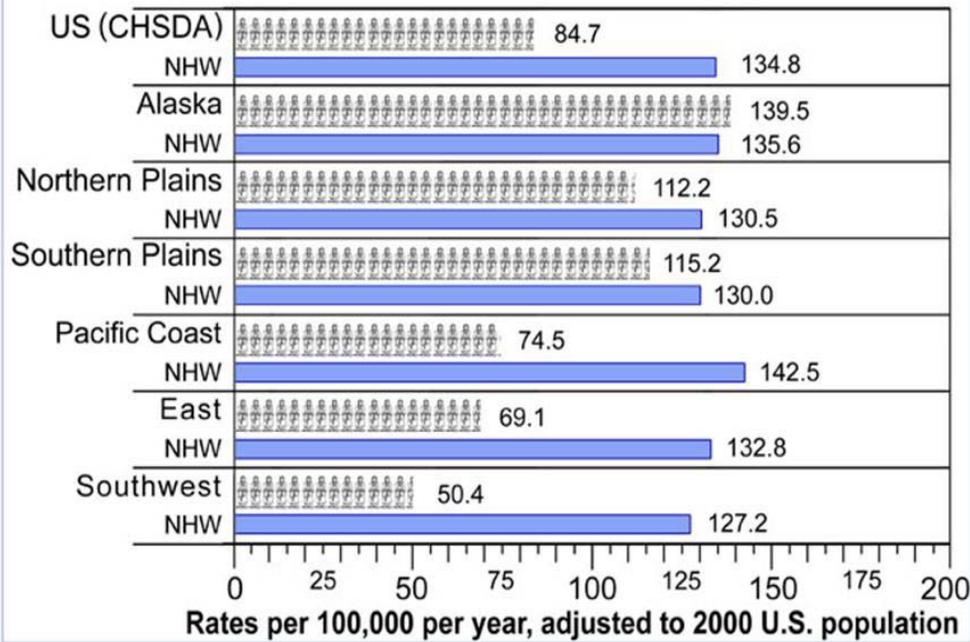
"I asked my doctor for the mammogram"



Breast Cancer Facts

- 📖 We do not know how to "prevent" breast cancer
- 📖 We do know how to find it early when it is just beginning to grow and when it is easier to beat.
- 📖 There are different types of breast cancer
- 📖 They spread and act differently in the body
 - 🕒 Some types of breast cancer begin to spread as the initial tumor is developing
 - 🕒 Others grow for about 7 years before it can be felt.
- 📖 Breast cancer usually occurs in women older than 40
- 📖 The younger the woman is at the time of diagnosis, the more likely the cancer is to spread
- 📖 Because men also have breast tissue, they too can get breast cancer (but 100 times more common in women than men).
- 📖 Lesbians are also at risk for breast cancer.
- 📖 Young women (20's and 30's) also develop breast cancer.
- 📖 The size of a woman's breast does not matter – small breasted women also get breast cancer.
- 📖 If "breast" cancer spreads to the bone or brain, it is still "breast cancer" [such as, "breast cancer of the brain"]

Breast Cancer Incidence Rates - Females, 1999-2004



Graph Legend

- CHSDA: IHS Contract Health Service Delivery Area
- NHW: Non-Hispanic White
- Alaska: includes *all* of Alaska
- Northern Plains: 11 states: IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, MT, NE, ND, SD, WI, WY
- Southern Plains: 3 states: KS, OK, TX
- Pacific Coast: 4 states: CA, ID, OR, WA
- East: 25 states, such as FL, GA, MO, MS, NC, NY, PA, TN
- Southwest; AZ, CO, NM, NV, UT

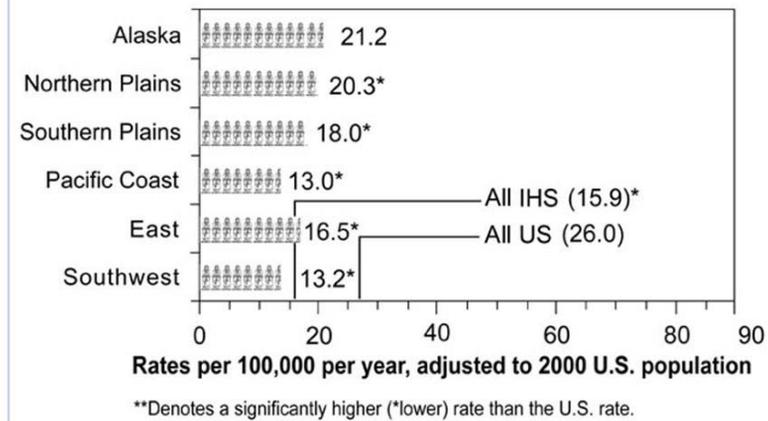
Espey, David K; Wo, Xiao-Chen; Swan Judith; Wiggins, Charles; Jim, Melissa A.; Ward, Elizabeth; Howe, Holly L.; Ries, Lynn A.G.; Miller, Barry A.; Jemal, Ahmedin; Ahmed, Faruque; Cobb, Nathaniel; Kaur, Judith S.; and Edwards, Brenda K. Annual Report to the Nation on the Status of Cancer, 1975-2004, Featuring Cancer in American Indians and Alaska Natives. Cancer [American Cancer Society]: 2007 [11-15-07]; Volume 110: No. 10. [GRAPH MODIFIED BY Rick Clark, Native American Cancer Research](#)

Symptoms of Breast Problems

- A change in the size or shape of your breast
- A lump or thickening of your breast or in your armpit
- Nipple discharge when you are not pregnant or breast feeding
- Inverted nipples or nipples that point in a different direction than before
- The skin appears rough or orange-tinted (similar to the texture of an orange peel) redness or scaling of nipples or breast
- Dimples on the breast or chest / armpit area (they look like the dimples that some people have on their faces when they smile).
- Nipple pain

If you have ANY of symptoms, you need to have your healthcare provider check things out

Breast Cancer Death Rates Females, 1999-2003



Haverkamp D, Espey D, Paisano R, Cobb N. *Cancer Mortality Among American Indians and Alaska Natives: Regional Differences, 1999-2003*. Indian Health Service, Rockville, MD, February 2008.

[GRAPHS MODIFIED BY: Rick Clark, Native American Cancer Research \(note horizontal grid\)](#)

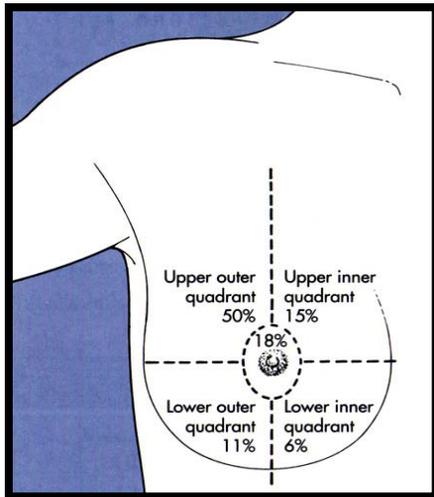


Jennie Joe, RN, PhD
Navajo
Dx. Breast 1989

It was overwhelming... I kept saying to myself, I just am not the high risk type... [breast cancer] has never been in my family before... ...I think that most women have to remember that they more than anybody else about their body.

Breast Health Screening

- By age 18, do monthly Breast Self-Exams (BSE)
 - Some organizations do not recommend BSE, but many Native women find lumps in their breasts through BSE
 - You should know what your breasts feel like
 - American Cancer Society provides instructions for BSE
- Have your health provider perform a Clinical Breast Exam during your annual checkup.
- Have your annual mammogram if you have symptoms or are high risk, or at least when you are 40 years old
 - Younger women need a different type of screening because their breast tissue is dense and it is harder to “see” abnormalities.



Most breast problems are NOT cancer. Please talk with your healthcare provider.

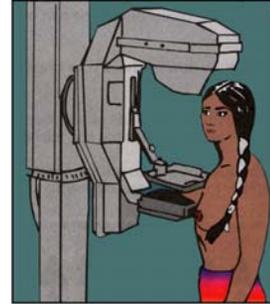


Clinical Breast Exam (CBE) Once a Year

- Having your provider check your breasts for lumps as part of your yearly check-up

What are Screening Mammograms? [a “diagnostic” mammogram is done any time there is a question or concern]

- A mammogram squeezes the breast between 2 clear “plates” and is uncomfortable.
- It is best to have it about 10 days after your moon when your breasts are not too tender
- Screening mammograms are every 1-2 years, once you are 40 or sooner if you have symptoms or your provider recommends one earlier
 - Some women have their exams about the same time as their birthdays
- A mammogram takes about 15 minutes (times vary)
- For the exam, you will need to take off your shirt/blouse and bra
- You will be given a nightgown top to wear into the mammography room

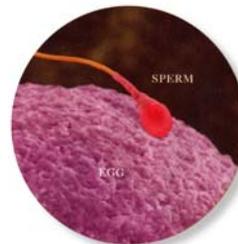


What is Breast Tissue?

- Breast tissue (cells) are in the chest area, not just in the mass supported by our bras
- This tissue is in your chest wall up to your collar bone
- It extends to under our arms
- It is under our breast to our ribs
- It is wide to our breast bone
- Although breast tissue is all over our chest wall, the locations of most cancers is in the upper outer quadrant of the breast

Some Questions about “Hereditary Breast Cancers”

- “Hereditary” means that the characteristic came from the sperm and egg (from your dad and mom) when you were conceived in the womb
- Hereditary cancers account for only 5-10% of all breast cancers in non-Natives
- Natives have very low risks for hereditary types of breast cancer
 - BRCA1 & BRCA2 are 2 types of hereditary breast cancer.
 - People with BRCA1 or BRCA2 have cancers of the breast, ovary, colon/rectal, prostate and/or pancreas
- There are also cancers that are common in families, but are NOT “hereditary”



Where can You Get Breast Health Screening?

- 📖 Tribal, urban Indian and state programs provide free annual breast screening for Native women who
 - 🕒 Do not have private health insurance (and IHS is NOT “insurance”)
 - 🕒 Are 50 years old *or* are high risk *or* have symptoms
 - 🕒 Live in poverty

The “shield” of health protecting against breast cancer may include daily physical activity, healthy low fat diet, & limited or no alcohol,

Risks that “damage” the shield of health include:

1. Being a woman (the greatest risk)
2. Growing older
3. Personal history of breast cancer
4. Personal history of another type of cancer
5. Early moon / onset of period (under 12) or late menopause (over 55)
6. Hereditary risk (e.g., BRCA1, BRCA2) *only cause 5-10% of all breast cancer – extremely rare in Native Americans*
7. Family history (risk is greater if “1st degree family member had breast cancer”
 - a. 1st degree means your parents, siblings or children
8. Sedentary life style
9. Over recommended body weight by 15-20 pounds (high fat / calorie diet)
10. Drinking equivalent to more than 7 alcoholic drinks in a week
11. No birth children or 1st child after the age of 30.
12. Breast feeding less than 1½ years

Partially supported by “Native Navigators and the Cancer Continuum (NNACC) [PI: Burhansstipanov, R24MD002811]

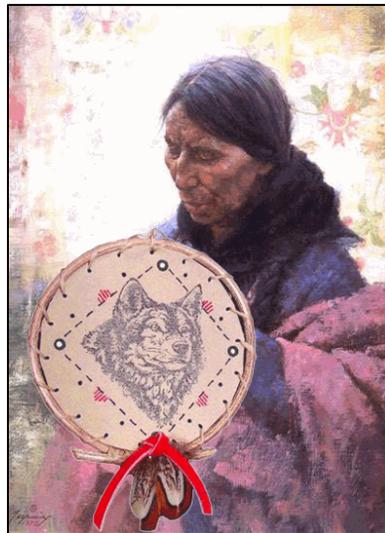


For more information, contact
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<http://www.NatAmCancer.org>

What “Causes” Breast Cancer?

- 📖 “Cause” means there is a direct link between the behavior or “factor” that may result in cancer (like habitual use of manufactured tobacco causing lung problems)
 - 🕒 The “cause” may be hereditary, but these types of breast cancer are very rare among Native women (<1%)
- 📖 A “Risk Factor” usually is a behavior or exposure to something that increases your chances of getting cancer (see the shield of health / risks)



The shield of health / risks

What does the shield below tell you about this woman's cancer risks?



The holes mean the woman has risks for breast cancer



Partially supported by Mayo Clinic's Spirit of Eagles Community Network Programs [PI: Kaur: NCI U01 CA 114609]